

35th District Report

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Quick bites

Credit Scoring: This was a big issue, important to many 35th-district constituents. Insurance companies can no longer use a customer's credit rating as their sole justification for cancelling or refusing to renew a policy, and the law limits credit-related premium hikes to no more than 20 percent in a year.

State Library: Many of us were stunned and disappointed to see the Washington State Library in the budget-cut crosshairs earlier this year, just to save a few million dollars. By the time we finalized a budget the library was given new life. This is a very important program, for the service it provides and for the message it conveys about who we are.

School Accountability: One of my bills that became law this year made some necessary adjustments to the Professional Educator Standards Board, which the Legislature created last year. We've added a classified school employee to the board, staggered the terms of the members, and expedited the process of getting qualified professionals into the classroom where they can do the most good.

Domestic Security: Another bill I sponsored is designed to keep sensitive documents, such as emergency response plans, or detailed descriptions of key energy-distribution systems, out of the hands of potential terrorists. This bill was at first opposed by newspaper groups who felt it would tie their hands in obtaining public records, but by the time session ended they had become supporters of the improved bill. This was, incidentally, the only bill to emerge from the House Select Committee on Domestic Security that made it to the governor's desk.

Unemployment Insurance Reform: With the support of both business and labor, this long-awaited change makes Washington's unemployment premiums more equitable and uniform and will save businesses millions of dollars over next three years. We also strengthened retraining programs for dislocated workers.

Veterans: As a member of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, I'm happy to say our military veterans fared well in the 2002 session. We passed a bill that will allow all veterans with honorable service records to qualify for a wide range of benefits that have, up to now, been available only to wartime vets. We took steps to protect veterans' privacy by sealing certain documents that contain sensitive information, such as social security numbers. And we passed legislation that will award high school diplomas to American veterans who left school before graduating so they could fight in World War II.

Representative
Kathy Haigh

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**35th
District
Report** | **2002
Legislative
Session**



Representative **Kathy Haigh**

35th District Report: The 2002 Legislative Session

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Committee assignments:

Education (*vice-chair*)

Rules

State Government

Transportation

Select Committee on

Community Security

Joint Committee on

Veterans and

Military Affairs

Joint Legislative Audit

and Review

Committee



Dear Friends,

The 2002 legislative session was a sprint to the finish line in just 60 days. We passed almost 400 bills and did complete rewrites of all three budgets (transportation, capital and general fund). This was my fourth session and it was the first time I was able to experience the House of Representatives functioning with a majority and minority party. The only system I had worked with for the last three years was the 49-49 tie. It became very clear to me that our state government was never constructed to operate in a stalemate. This session was very different, very productive, and defined by our ability to get the job done and get out of town.

That is not to say that it was easy. It was not easy to find the state \$1.5 billion over budget. It was not easy to raise over \$500 million in revenues through bonding against the tobacco money. And it was not easy to cut back more than \$600 million in spending. But we did it to the best of our ability, leaving only a small amount of trimming to the final discretion of the governor.

State government, for the most part, shifts money from general statewide revenues to fund programs and projects that serve people all over the state. When the state government runs out of money it is really the local school districts and city and county governments that run out of money. It was difficult to make the cuts and now it will be even more difficult to watch those public-service systems struggle to maintain quality and service with fewer dollars. I hope that we can all work to find efficiencies while continuing to deliver quality services. The economy is beginning to show signs of recovery and with diligence and hard work we will get through the tough times and be better off for it.

Last year we thought an earthquake was the worst thing we would have to survive. After September 11, we all knew better. Some of what we did this year was in direct response to that day. As a society we are resilient, but life in these United States has in some ways changed forever. I worked hard to try to improve our government to protect us from terrorist threats and yet preserve our civil liberties to the greatest extent possible.

The most important difference in 2002 was that even with war, recession, budget woes and other pressures to deal with, the session was marked by leadership and accomplishment in many areas. I'll touch briefly on many of these accomplishments, and some disappointments, in this newsletter. If you'd like more information about a specific issue or bill, please let me know.

As always, I'm honored to be your representative, and I look forward to working with you at the local community level over the next few months.

Sincerely,

Kathryn M. Haigh
Kathy

Saying no to bullies

After five years of struggle, we finally saw the passage of the Safe Schools bill. This bill, which was one of my top priorities this year, says our children shouldn't have to put up at school with the kind of bullying, intimidation and harassment that none of us, as adults, would stand for in our offices or factories or stores. Bullying is directly linked to many acts of school violence, including the campus shootings that have plagued America in the last decade. We heard compelling testimony from students for whom bullies makes school a nightmare, and we know that they're just the tip of the iceberg. The Safe Schools bill directs all school districts to put in place locally-drafted anti-bullying policies before the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.

Supermajority — Let the people decide

Perhaps my greatest disappointment this year was the fact that the supermajority bill failed to pass the House by the required two-thirds vote. This bill, upon approval by a public vote of the people, would have changed the requirement of a 60-percent supermajority to a majority-rule on school bond and levy issues. That would allow a simple majority of the voters — 50 percent plus one vote — to pass maintenance and operations levies, as well as school bond issues. To me the issue was simple: Let the vote of the people decide the outcome. But once again the bill failed to get the 66 votes needed to put it on the ballot this fall.

Getting Washington moving again

That was one of my top priorities when the legislative session started back in January, and it still is. It's also the goal of a \$7.6 billion, 10-year transportation and revenue plan that Washington voters will be asked to pass judgment on next fall. Very briefly, passage in November would raise these billions by increasing the gas tax by five cents on New Year's Day 2003, and four more cents a year later. The plan would call for a one-percent sales tax on new and used vehicles, and impose a 30-percent hike in trucking weight fees.

It isn't true, as some have said, that regions outside the Snohomish-King-Pierce County metroplex would lose out under this plan. A new Purdy Creek bridge on 101 and the long-awaited Skobob Creek fish passage are at the top of the 35th-district list, and next-door in Grays Harbor County, passage of the plan



in November would finally fund a saw-mill rail spur that means real jobs. Of particular significance in Kitsap County is the fact that the proposal includes nearly \$700 million in ferry funding.

My seatmate Bill Eickmeyer and I both insisted that citizens be given the chance to vote this plan up or down. Now that we have that opportunity this November, I believe it is vital that we all understand what is in the plan. That's why I've scheduled three transportation forums in the coming weeks to present factual information about this proposal (I have included dates, times and locations below). I won't slant the information toward a particular outcome; my hope is that every person who votes will base that vote on what they know about the plan, rather than what they've heard.

Mason and Kitsap County Transportation Forums

Tuesday, May 21	Thursday, May 30	Tuesday, June 4
7 p.m.	7 p.m.	7 p.m.
Shelton Civic Center 525 W. Cota Shelton	Elma Senior Center 100 W. Main Elma	City Council Chambers Room Bremerton City Hall 239 4th Street Bremerton
Please join us. These forums are free and open to the public.		

Balancing the budget without raising taxes

Facing the worst recession in 20 years, we balanced the state's budget without raising general taxes for consumers or business. To fill the \$1.5 billion gap we cut more than \$600 million in services, eliminated 900 state jobs, reduced state employee benefits, and carefully reapportioned available resources to protect basic education and other vital programs that help our most vulnerable citizens.

The budget we produced isn't pretty. Real people with real needs will suffer because our belt is so tight. But with general tax hikes off the table — that's not the way to come out of a recession — legislative budget-writers did a good job of trimming, chopping, shifting and shoring. Barring a miracle in the next few months, our problems aren't going away, but in the meantime, our budget is balanced and government is fulfilling its basic responsibilities to its owners — the people of Washington.



Sex offenders

No matter what the economy is doing, nothing is as basic to government as public safety. This year the Legislature set out to make it more difficult in several ways for sex offenders to do their damage. Bills we passed this year will:

- Prohibit a person responsible for the care of a child from leaving that child with registered sex offenders. Like so many other laws, this one was prompted by preventable tragedy.
- Help ensure that sex offenders are not released from custody before being evaluated for a possible longer sentence by the Department of Corrections and the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board.
- Prohibit judges from excusing certain sex offenders from mandatory registration.
- Restore the offense of "communicating with a minor for immoral purposes" to the definition of "sex offense" in state law — requiring persons convicted of that offense to register as sex offenders.
- Require the creation of a statewide registered sex offender website.



Civil service reform

Another good bipartisan bill that couldn't reach the House floor during the 49-49 years finally came to a vote in 2002. We enacted landmark civil service reform legislation that will streamline government, make it more efficient, and grant public servants the same collective-bargaining rights that their colleagues at the county and city levels have enjoyed for many years.

I believe strongly in collective bargaining. I believe it is one of the things that has made our society strong and helped the average citizen attain a pretty good standard of living. I also believe this will be good for every taxpayer, because it provides state employees with even more motivation to step up and be part of the solution. But I do want to stress that this was only one leg of a three-legged stool. In addition to allowing collective bargaining, the civil-service reform act updates archaic rules and regulations that have long worked against efficiency and merit-based advancement, and increases the practice of contracting out state jobs to private industry.